



September 3, 2019

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN WALTON COUNTY ENCOURAGES RESIDENTS TO HAVE A PERSONAL DISASTER PLAN

Contact:

Tom Smith

Thomas.smith@flhealth.gov

Office: 850-401-6364

DeFuniak Springs, FL - September is National Preparedness Month and a good time for residents to make or review their personal disaster plan. For Florida residents, that most often means planning for a hurricane or tropical storm. While we are not in the immediate threat of Hurricane Dorian, it is a reminder to be prepared.

If a hurricane or tropical storm affects our area, knocking down trees and electrical wires, help may not be immediately available once the storm has passed. A good rule of thumb is "the first 72 are on you", meaning you will need to have enough emergency supplies on hand to be self-sufficient for at least 72 hours.

One decision you will have to make before the storm strikes is whether to evacuate or stay in your home. To decide, ask yourself these questions:

- **Is your home in an evacuation zone?** You can find out by going to the Walton Department of Emergency Management website at <https://www.co.walton.fl.us/1063/Emergency-Management> clicking on *Know Your Evacuation Zone* and entering your address. The site will tell you whether you are in an evacuation zone and if any evacuations have been ordered.
- **Is your home safe?** If you live in a mobile home, or your home needs extensive repairs, it may be a good idea to move to a building that is more structurally sound, even if you are not in an evacuation zone.
- **Where will you go if you evacuate?** Can you stay with a friend, stay in a motel, or will you have to go to a shelter? A shelter should be your last resort. Although they may be safe, they are frequently uncomfortable, noisy, and there may be little privacy. Household members with special medical needs may be eligible for the

Special Needs Shelter. They can pre-register by going online to <https://www.co.walton.fl.us/1194/Special-Needs-Shelter-Registration>

Whether you stay or go, you will want to assemble a disaster kit that includes such items as:

- Non-perishable food
- Can opener
- Water - one gallon per person, per day (don't forget to include food and water for pets)
- First aid kit
- Radio
- Flashlight
- Batteries
- Paper cups, plates, plastic utensils
- Cash (ATMs and debit/credit card machines will not work if the power is out)
- Blankets and pillows (or sleeping bags)
- Change of clothes appropriate to the climate
- Sturdy shoes
- Rain poncho
- Personal hygiene items (soap, washcloth, toothpaste, tooth brush, deodorant, etc.)
- Cell phone and portable charger
- Enough essential medications to last 3 days
- Important papers in a water tight container (or scan and put them on a thumb drive)
- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen
- Bleach or some other disinfectant
- Books and games

If your household includes an infant or older adult, you will also want to include any special items they will need such as baby formula, baby wipes, or adult incontinence supplies.

Fill your vehicle's gas tank. If you have a generator, fill gas cans and store them in a safe manner. Remember to take precautions to avoid carbon monoxide exposure or other accidents when using your generator:

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for safe operation.
- Do not operate the generator in the house or garage.
- Install a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector in your home.
- Keep children and pets away from the generator (generators can become hot quickly).

[FloridaDisaster.org](https://www.floridadisaster.org) includes a site to help you create a disaster plan customized for your family. Visit the site for more safety information and tips for preparing for disasters.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](https://www.nacac.org/), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and Twitter at [@HealthyFla](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit www.FloridaHealth.gov.